DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 181 597 EA 012 407

AUTHOR Redfern, George B.
TITLE Personnel Evaluation: Promises, Problems, and Prospects.
PUB DATE 14 Jan 80
NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Association of Secondary School Principals (64th, Miami Beach, FL, January 11-15, 1980).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Elementary Secondary Education: *Evaluation Needs: *Personnel Evaluation: Program Improvement; School Systems: Speeches

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses finding new approaches to personnel evaluation, learning to handle special problems that arise, and calculating prospects for program success. Obstacles to an effective evaluation program, which the paper discusses and diagrams, include diverse or conflicting expectations, time drain, negative attitudes, lack of relevancy, hostile climate, and unrealistic mandates. Finally, the paper examines forces--both inside and outside the school system--that will give impetus to continued changes in evaluation practices. (Author/LD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED181597

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

PERSONNEL EVALUATION: PROMISES, PROBLEMS, AND PROSPECTS

GEORGE B. REDFERN

EA 012 407

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

G. Redfern

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

NASSP Convention
Miami Beach
January 14, 1980

PERSONNEL EVALUATION: PROMISES, PROBLEMS, AND PROSPECTS

For more than two decades, I have been concerned about the best ways to evaluate personnel. This continuing interest has been expressed by making speeches, conducting clincis, workshops, seminars, in writing, and in consultation. The main thrust of these efforts has been to look for the PROMISES in new approaches to evaluation, to learn how to cope with practical PROBLEMS that inevitably emerge, and to believe that the PROSPECTS for success are favorable.

PROMISES. Without promises of greater success in pursuing different approaches and in seeking ways to overcome the weaknesses of many traditional programs, the persistence to challenge the status quo would have ended long ago. Change is difficult to bring about. Adherence to existing techniques, even though they fall short of being effective, is deeply ingrained. So, it has been the promises of a better plan of evaluation that has been the fuel to keep the search alive.

Improvement To change evaluation from an essentially negative to a positive process, requires a different overall purpose, which is to enable a person to become more effective. This emphasis upon improvement restsupon a very simple premise; namely, that a successful person can become even more effective and that a less able individual can improve, provided the opportunity is present and if evaluation is used as a tool to bring about that change.

Planning Improvement without planning is unlikely to occur. It has been said that unless one plans, it is difficult to get to a given destination or even to know when you do get there. Planning becomes an essential part of the achievement of desired outcomes in evaluation. Step-by-step, the individual and evaluator move toward the desired ends. Systematic planning, implementation

of the plans and careful measurement of the results are the ingredients of meaningful evaluation.

Partnership Planning through partnership is one of the brightest promises of a different approach to personnel evaluation. Evaluatees plan with evaluators. They work in partnership with each other. The concept of peer participation in evaluation is one of the best promises that justify effort to keep advocating a different approach to this process.

Objectives Planning through partnership is done by means of objectives which reflect mutual agreement as being responsive to needs or areas of emphasis on the part of the person being evaluated. Objectives point directions; they are the stepping stones to improvement and success.

Collaboration To set an objective is one thing; to achieve it is quite another. Achieving it is a collaborative process involving the partnership principle. Both the person being evaluated and the individual serving as evaluator have a mutual interest in the successful implementation of the action plan to achieve the objective. Complementing roles make the difference.

Results Evaluation by means of specific objectives and action plans put the emphasis upon results actually achieved. The pay-off is on what really happens - not upon good intentions - not upon just effort, but upon actual outcomes.

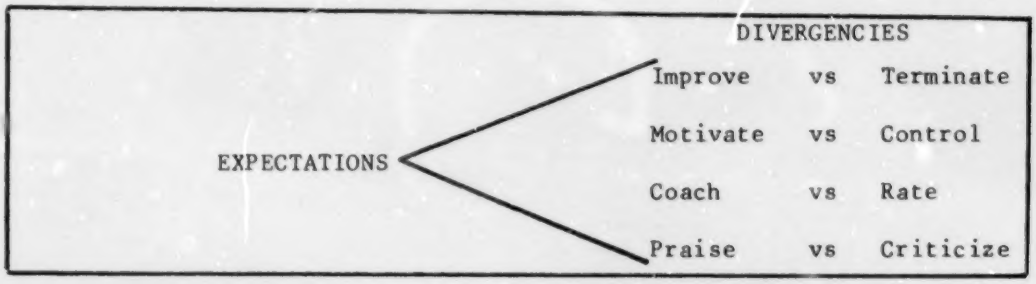
Motivation Without motivation, an individual is likely not to experience genuine satisfaction or achieve the desired results in the evaluation process. On the other hand, experiencing successful attainment of objectives contributes to motivation and it, in turn, helps to guarantee the results desired.

IMPROVEMENT	PARTNERSHIP	COLLABORATION	MOTIVATION
PLANNING	OBJECTIVES	RESULTS	

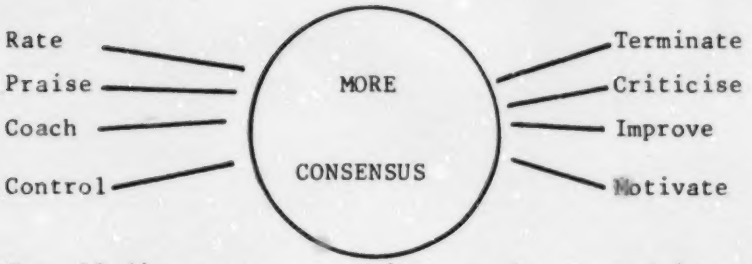
These and other promises, inherent in a different approach to personnel evaluation, have encouraged me to keep advocating a more positive personnel assessment process.

Gains and Losses The bottom line on the balance sheet, in the quest for better evaluation prccedures, show both gains and losses. There has been gradual movement throughout the country toward the objectives approach to personnel evaluation. This represents gain. On the other hand, most school systems continue to use traditional or modified traditional procedures. The validity of the promises is still sufficiently compelling, however, to justify continued pursuit of evaluation by objectives.

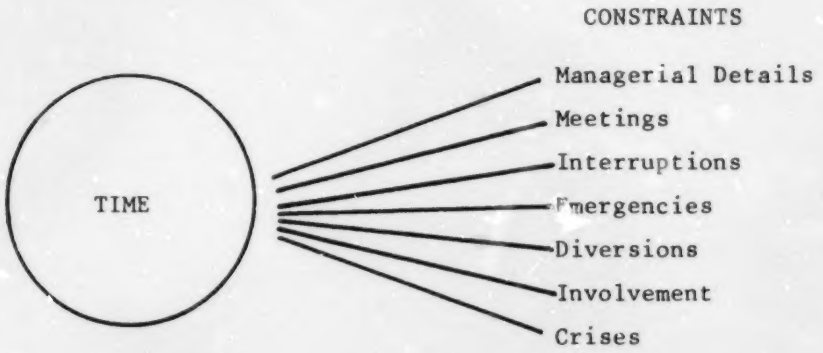
Problems The second P in the trilogy standsfor problems. Admittedly, there are problems in personnel evaluation regardless of the form it takes. The reason is tnat personnel evaluation is a sensitive process involving many complex interpersonal relationships. Whenever two or more persons become involved in evaluation, there are bound to be problems.



Diverse expectations, on the part of those involved in evaluation, can cause problems. When expectations of parents, board members, superintendents, central office staff members, principals, and teachers are in sharp variance - perhaps even in conflict - serious problems occur.



Not all divergent expectations may be changed into consensus, but the gap has to be narrowed, otherwise, evaluation cannot be made a cohesive process. Attempts have to be made to reconcile differences. While total consensus will not be possible, enough should be achieved to assure a reasonable amount of success.



Relief has to comes from two sources: actions by (a) the individual and (b) the school system itself. More time cannot be created except by better time management, on the part of the individual, and on the other hand, by deliberate efforts by the school system itself to avoid inordinate drain upon the time and energies of individuals. Someone, at the top management level, has to see that:

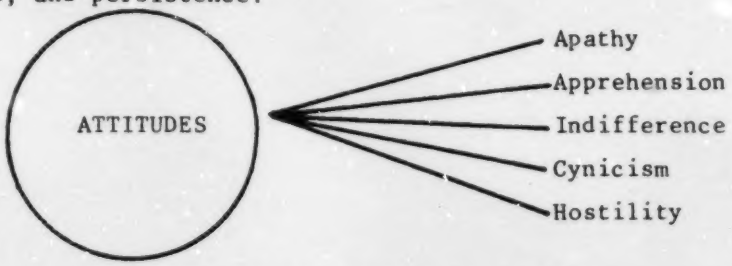
(a) reports and paperwork are held in check or better yet - reduced

(b) only necessary and essential meetings are called

(c) red tape is kept to a minimum

(and so on)

Some drain is unavoidable, but some can be prevented. Otherwise, these constraints become so pervasive that effective evaluation becomes nearly impossible. Also, the individual has to avoid using time constraint as an excuse. Better time management is possible, but it will take real effort, self-discipline, and persistence.



Trying to modify attitudes, especially those which are basically negative, is difficult. Very often, only symptoms rather than causes are addressed because it is hard to get at gut-level reasons for negative attudes toward evaluation:

Common sense dictates a few rather obvious things:

(a) Start by accepting those whose attitudes toward evaluation are different from your own

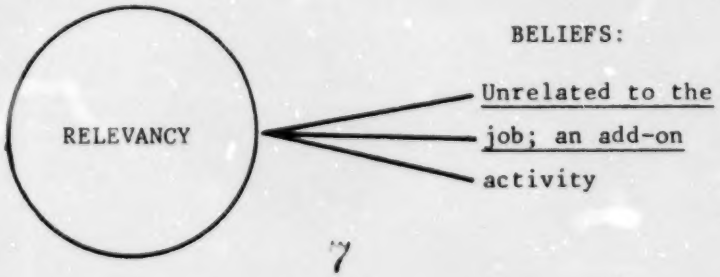
(b) Explore basic reasons for negative attitudes

(c) Explain the differences between the objectives approach and traditional procedures

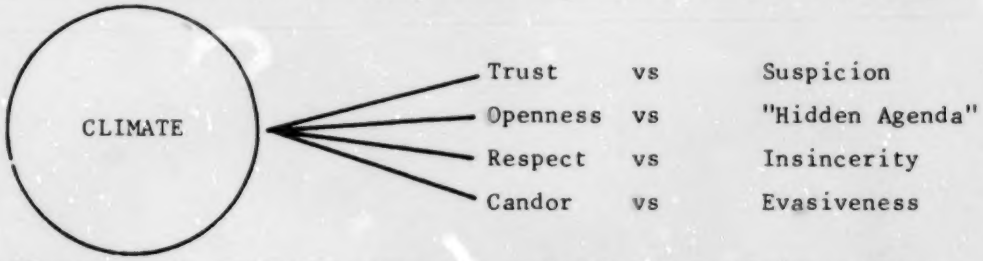
(d) Challenge the individual to give the new approach a fair chance

(e) Carry out the process so that the individual can feel a sense of success

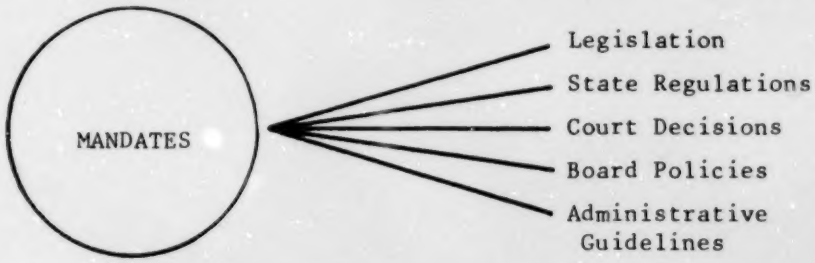
These things may help to change negative into positive attitudes. At least, it is worth a try.



For a long time, evaluation has been regarded, by some, as being peripheral to on-going, day-to-day duties and responsibilities. When viewed as an add-on activity, rather than a relevant part of the job, it will have little, if any, real significance. It will become a kind of exercise in futility - something to be tolerated, but little valued. If evaluation has no relevancy to daily duties it is bound to be regarded as an extra burden.



Climate can be a problem. If it is positive and conducive to good interpersonal relationships, evaluation will have a better chance of being successful. On the other hand, if it is characterized by distrust and cynicism, the probability of success will be minimal. It is far easier to maintain and improve a conducive climate than to turn a bad one around.

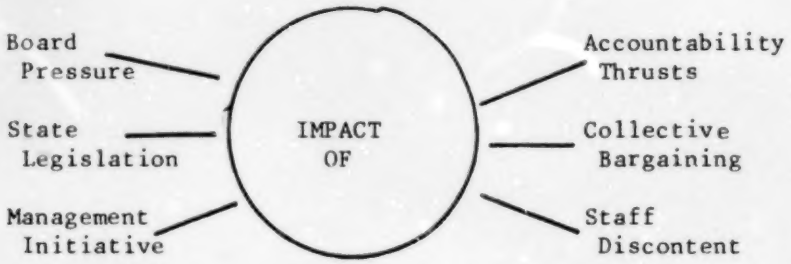


There has been a trend, in recent years, for state legislatures, state education agencies, courts, local boards of education, and local school systems to promulgate legislation, regulations, decisions, policies, and guidelines which affect the substance and processes of personnel evaluation. This trend has resulted in some gains and some losses. Some external pressure may be useful, but on the whole, it is better for action to originate within the school system itself as a result of perceived need.

EXPECTATIONS	ATTITUDES	CLIMATE
TIME	RELEVANCY	MANDATES

Diverse or conflicting expectations, time drain, negative attitudes, lack of relevancy, hostile climate, and unrealistic mandates present serious problems in carrying out an effective evaluation program. Where these problems or others of equal importance, exist, it will be necessary to seek ways to overcome them. It may take time and tenacity, but left unresolved, the odds are against success in achieving good evaluation results.

Prospects The third P stands for prospects or prognosis. In other words, what are the possibilities for improving an existing evaluation program or making modifications that will make for better results? This is the third concern of this presentation.



The impetus for continued changes in evaluation practices will come from within and outside the school system itself. Boards of Education will press for evaluation procedures that will produce more explicit indices of success in the delivery of educational services. State legislatures are likely to pass statutes which will mandate changes in evaluation procedures. School administrators and supervisors will undoubtedly initiate changes. Educational organizations, at national, state, and local levels will push for modifications in the way evaluation procedures are designed and carried out. Collective bargaining will continue to have an impact upon evaluation and the presuure for more accountability will bring more changes.

More Valid Evaluation Data

There will be greater reliance upon more valid evaluation information and less emphasis upon subjective assessment.

Closer Working Relationships

Persons being evaluated and those doing the assessing will be obliged to work together more closely and in a mutually supportive framework

More Emphasis Upon Results

Individuals will be judged more by the results of their efforts than by those efforts alone. In other words, outcomes become more significant than efforts put forth.

Validation of Deficiencies

If and when services are deemed to be below the satisfactory level, there will be more and better evidence to substantiate the allegation.

Evaluation Will Be Positive

Finally, a different approach to evaluation with emphasis upon achievement of mutually agreed upon objectives can and will turn evaluation from being essentially a negative to a positive experience.

Other Prospects

There are some additional prospects which can be anticipated if school systems will move toward adopting the objectives emphasized in their evaluation programs.

Better Job Definition

One dividend will be better description of job expectations because the dimension of duties and responsibilities have to be explicitly determined and described before meaningful evaluation can take place.

Better Planning

Evaluation will take place in a planned, sequential manner. Needs will be identified better. Objectives will be set to respond to those needs. Implementing action will be more systematic and assessment will be more accurate and based upon better information.

I believe that more and more teachers and principals will come to accept evaluation in this framework, once they understand its full ramifications. I feel too that:

-- Promises, in this approach, outweigh the problems -- prospects justify continuing a strong and persistent advocacy to keep moving toward making personnel evaluation a more productive process.

George B. Redfern
Arlington, Virginia